

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**American Preparatory Academy  
12892 Pony Express Road  
Draper, Utah 84020**

**May 24, 2006**



**Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**American Preparatory Academy  
12892 Pony Express Road  
Draper, Utah 84020**

**May 24, 2006**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF  
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## **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, May 24, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of American Preparatory Academy is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Director Carolyn Sharette is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at American Preparatory Academy, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at American Preparatory Academy.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

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9/8/2005

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Max Meyer..... Business Manager  
Max Meyer..... Director Buildings and Grounds  
Laura Campbell..... Supervisor Elementary Education

# AMERICAN PREPARATORY ACADEMY

## ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

### School Administration

Carolyn Sharette..... Director  
Laura Campbell..... Assistant Director  
Max Meyer..... Business Manager  
Bryan Durst..... Junior High Coordinator  
Kevin McVicar..... Director of Outreach Services

### Counseling

Tasha Keys..... Counselor  
Shar Elmer ..... Speech  
Kimberly Erickson..... Speech

### Support Staff

Kevin McVicar..... Outreach Director  
Kay Rindlesbach ..... Administrative Assistant  
Cathie Adamson..... Administrative Assistant  
Marion Minson..... Administrative Assistant  
Shelley Brooks ..... Administrative Support  
Erasmo Jahen ..... Custodial Support  
Kris Ridgeway ..... Maintenance Support  
Britney Galovich..... Instructional Coach  
Stacey Anderson ..... Instructional Coach  
Julie Kiser ..... Procurement Director

### Faculty

Susan Alldredge ..... 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Choir  
Rebecca Allen ..... Junior High Latin  
Laurel Anderson..... 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Instructor  
Jennifer Brown..... Staff Students After School Instruction  
Susan Carlson..... Junior High Science  
Jacquie Chappell ..... 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Lola Cook..... Junior High English Teacher  
Sherrie Deppe..... Groups Instructor  
Liz Drake ..... Junior High Mentor  
Belinda Durling..... 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher  
Abbey Fay ..... 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Instructor

Melanie Ferlo .....	Groups Instructor
Kristen Gallup .....	Spelling Instructor
Virginia Goold .....	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Instructor
RoyAnn Gregerson .....	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher
Loretta Hall .....	Groups Instructor
Allison Hansen .....	Instrumental Teacher
Vicky Hansen .....	Kindergarten Teacher
Marla Hintze .....	Elementary Choral Music Instructor
Christina Ho .....	Junior High Math Teacher
Sheri Holt .....	Math Group Instructor
Tammy Johnson .....	PM Kindergarten Instructor
Jennifer Kamp .....	AM Kindergarten Instructor
Laura Leavitt .....	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher
Amy Liljenquist .....	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher
Sharon Lloyd .....	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Instructor
Deb Lovendahl .....	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
Carrie McWhirter .....	Junior High History Teacher
Kristie Mechling .....	Groups Instructor
Nattalie Minson .....	Reading Group Instructor
Chantal Moesinger .....	Art Teacher
John Morgan .....	Junior High Choir Teacher
Kelly Mousley .....	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Instructor
Susan Neilson .....	PE Teacher
Sherrie Nish .....	Groups Instructor
Kathleen Payne .....	Curriculum Director
Dawn Peters .....	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
Jen Powell .....	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Instructor
Allyson Rodriguez .....	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Instructor
Camille Sereni .....	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Instructor
Michelle Sharette .....	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
Mike Sharette .....	Junior High After School Support
Melody Shock .....	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
Jeffrey Sorensen .....	Junior High English Teacher
Julie Tate .....	Spelling Group Instructor
Viktor Tchemodanov .....	Junior High Math Teacher
Sara Ward .....	Staff Yoga Instructor
McKenzi Warnock .....	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher
Connie Welch .....	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Instructor
Heidi Wilcox .....	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher
Svetlana Winward .....	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
Kathryn Woodcox .....	Instrumental Music & Math Instructor

# **AMERICAN PREPARATORY ACADEMY**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To provide an orderly, safe and nurturing learning environment wherein content-rich, efficient curriculum and research-based instructional methodologies are utilized to ensure that every student achieves academic success and develops good character based on concrete measurements.

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

**Our school Philosophy is expressed in 7 sub-categories:**

1. Rigorous academics combined with high student motivation
2. Adherence to classical education principles, including the Trivium
3. Sequential, organized, defined curricula
4. Use of achievement groups for skills acquisition
5. Mastery of content and skills
6. School-wide organization and management
7. Regular evaluation and improvement planning

## **School Vision**

To provide a safe, fun, nurturing learning environment that utilizes research-based, efficient curriculum and proven instructional methodologies to ensure that EVERY CHILD achieves academic success and develops good character based on concrete measurements.

### **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Dr. Ralph P. Vander Heide, Consultant in Accreditation, Visiting Team  
Chairperson

Dr. Marilyn Prettyman, Principal, Stillwater Academy

Kathleen Hood, Principal, Kearns-St. Ann School

# VISITING TEAM REPORT

## AMERICAN PREPARATORY ACADEMY

### CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

American Preparatory Academy opened in the fall of 2003 with 460 students in grades K-8. Since that time, the school has expanded and now serves 530 students in grades K-9. The school model was developed by Carolyn Sharette, the school's founder, who had previously helped open a charter school in Littleton, Colorado. Mrs. Sharette served on the governing board of the first charter school in Colorado, and also taught fourth graders in a charter school in Colorado Springs. These experiences led to the formation of the American Preparatory Academy instructional model and school organization.

Originally chartered by Jordan School District, American Preparatory Academy now operates under a charter with the Utah State Department of Education.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Since the school makes ongoing use of profile data, there were no significant new findings, but all such data is used for ongoing improvement.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

It would be helpful and informative to include in future self-studies more detailed information on the class schedules, including time on task, differences among time allotted for different classes, etc.

The Visiting Team found some graphs to be confusing. The school leadership should make certain that future self-studies contain graphs that have clear explanations or are readily understandable.

### CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

**Note:** The self-study points out that American Preparatory Academy has been "required to look upon accreditation a bit non-traditionally" due to its status as a public charter school. This is explained in the self-study as follows:

...[O]ur origin is a bit unique and it affects our accreditation process. The school mission and vision were developed prior to our receiving a charter (our contract to operate from the state of Utah). Because it is part of a state contract, our mission and vision can only be altered upon an amendment to the charter. Additionally, charter schools are required to outline “effectiveness goals” in their charter application. These concrete, measurable goals are also part of our contract with the state of Utah and cannot be altered except upon amendment of the charter.

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Collaboration conforms to all the objectives of the school and forms part of the very ethos of American Preparatory Academy.

- b) *To what extent does the school’s self-study accurately reflect the school’s current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team members found that the self-study was very frank about explaining and exploring both strengths and needs for improvement.

### **CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

American Preparatory Academy’s desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- Academic Achievement
- Character Development

Specific goals and rubrics, as well as indicators of achievement, are given for each DRSL, as indicated below for Academic Achievement:

Students will experience academic success (defined here as mastery at 80% proficiency) in major skill areas – reading, math, and spelling.

Goals:

1. Delivery of a focused academic program outlined and communicated in the American Preparatory Academy Academic Guide.
2. Consistent, frequent assessment and reporting of student progress in skills areas (reading, math spelling)
3. Consistent, frequent evaluation of student needs

4. Flexibility in delivery of academic program to meet student needs

Rubric:

1. Initial stages of development are evident
2. Evidence of progress exists, but yet to satisfy competent level of achievement
3. Evidence of fully, competent level of achievement
4. Evidence of exemplary level of achievement

**Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

This has been well accomplished. As is noted at the beginning of this report, the mission, vision, and goals are set out (as required) in the charter. They are evaluated collaboratively every year and refined as needed as part of the school improvement plan. The self-study process for accreditation has therefore been to involve stakeholders in “studying those elements already in place, working to come to a full understanding of them, evaluating how well we are implementing them, and adding to them goals and plans that would help us achieve them more fully.”

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

There appears to be enthusiastic, 100 percent commitment and collaboration, driven by strong leadership that is concerned with data-driven and research-based educational goals.

- c) *To what extent do the school’s mission and beliefs align to support the school’s desired results for student learning?*

Beliefs, vision and mission are the basis of the DRSLs.

The Visiting Team commends the school for also having a vision statement and a school philosophy. The seven sub-categories of the philosophy form the school beliefs.

The vision is detailed in the following four sub-categories: Safe, Fun, Nurturing, and Learning.

The Visiting Team also takes note of the four “Foundations” with which all stakeholders seem to be familiar: Expectations, Effort, Enthusiasm and Excellence.

Lastly, “Builders” is the theme of American Preparatory Academy, of which all students and faculty seem to be very proud. They are certainly not “wreckers,” but rather they build to become ever better.

All of the above is stressed daily. The theme, mission, etc., are posted in classrooms. Students can recite some of these objectives and fundamental beliefs.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Teaching is based on the standards of the Utah State Core Curriculum and the well-known programs of instruction—“Core Knowledge” and “Direct Instruction”—of Science Research Associates (SRA).

Core Knowledge, it is claimed, is based on proven best educational practices and offers a coherent sequence of specific knowledge that builds year by year. Core Knowledge claims to be distinguished by the way in which it clearly specifies the most important areas of knowledge in all subjects and answers the question of what children “need to know.”

As the self-study clarifies, both Core Knowledge and Direct Instruction have long, proven track records and meet the rigorous tests of providing excellent academic outcomes in controlled research studies over long periods of time. The Visiting Team determined that all requirements of Utah’s State Core Curriculum and the Life Skills are more than adequately covered.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school’s desired results for student learning?*

This is part of the very ethos at American Preparatory Academy. DRSLs are understood and covered by all teachers. The DRSLs were determined through an extensive collaborative effort.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Students engage in a variety of learning experiences as noted above under “Curriculum Development.” The self-study also points out that a “key component in our Sequential, Organized and Defined Curricula is the development of the American Preparatory Academy Academic Guide. This comprehensive document outlines **what we teach and when we teach it** in every grade in every subject.” Knowing “what” and “when” allows teachers to establish benchmarks and performance indicators, and to better assess comprehension and progress.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

See above.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Many such opportunities are offered, which requires a great amount of time and diligence. (Also see a) above).

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Students are easily and frequently assessed on the content of the two cornerstone programs of CK and DI. This gives teachers much information with which to analyze the teaching/learning effectiveness and revise procedures as needed to better meet the learning needs of students.

The development of assessments of student learning is based on a clear definition of the type of achievement to be assessed and the performance standards for evaluating the quality of students’ achievement. Assessment is both formative and summative. It appeared to the Visiting Team that assessments are fair, equitable, creative and varied. Teachers attempt to individualize assessment. The Visiting Team highly commends teachers for incorporating or creating a variety of assessments in their effort to individualize.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

All assessment is congruent with specific standards and desired learning outcomes.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

A core objective at American Preparatory Academy is that assessment be equitable.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership is highly and commendably involved in fostering such a climate.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The terms “research-based,” “data,” and “collaboration” are frequently used at American Preparatory Academy by the school leadership and all stakeholders. It appeared to the Visiting Team that all decision making regarding the school programs is data-driven and collaborative.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The leadership does this very conscientiously.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

Skillful stewardship is evident and repeatedly acknowledged by the Visiting Team in this report.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Decision making by the school management is directly related to learning outcomes and ongoing improvement endeavors. This is, in fact, required in the school’s charter and is its very reason for existing (i.e., to use resources for the best possible development of each child).

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team members were most impressed at the high level of participation of all stakeholders in working toward the DRSLs and other objectives.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school, and to what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

It is noted repeatedly above that this is part of the ethos at American Preparatory Academy. School leadership—and, in fact, all stakeholders—foster cooperative, goal-directed working relationships within the school.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Teachers receive training as needed. Much effort has been directed at training all teachers in the best ways to present CK and DI.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school, as repeatedly noted above, is devoted to continuous improvement and change (if need is proven by testing, etc.) as needed.

## **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI**

### **Standard I – Educational Program**

American Preparatory Academy meets or exceeds all four sections of this standard. The educational program is aligned with the mission statement and

beliefs, and is carried out in accordance with the stipulations of its charter. The Visiting Team observed that the vision for the school has been collaboratively developed. The instructional and organizational practices, as well as the policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society. As noted, the program of studies meets or exceeds the requirements of the State Core Curriculum in following the Core Knowledge sequential curriculum of Dr. E.D. Hirsch combined with Direct Instruction (SRA).

## **Standard II – Student Personnel Services**

All three sections of this standard are met. Personnel services are designed to give appropriate, systematic assistance to students, as called for in the subsections of the requirements. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled. The primary objective of the counseling program is to promote and enhance the academic and personal development of students and to prepare them for post-American Preparatory Academy experiences.

## **Standard III – School Plant and Equipment**

This standard is met. The purpose-built school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs, and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere. It provides for the health and safety of students and all school faculty and personnel.

## **Standard IV – Library Media Program**

American Preparatory Academy **does not meet** the five sections of this standard as outlined by NAAS. The school has no central library/media center. Therefore, there is no central resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support that contributes to the achievement of the DRSLs and other goals.

However, the school does not ignore the need for a library, since each classroom has a library and students have specific reading assignments. They check out books in the classrooms. Furthermore, local public libraries are used. The Visiting Team recognizes that students read and use other media to a great extent, and commends the school for its “Reading University” program, which encourages, and even requires, the reading of quality literature and specific universally recognized fine literature.

Still, the Visiting Team concludes that the school would benefit from the expertise of a certified library media teacher who could provide instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information. The school is encouraged to revisit the possibility of establishing a central library. Classroom libraries could continue to exist.

It appears that sufficient funds are provided each year to meet the present library needs of students and teachers.

#### **Standard V – Records**

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

#### **Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)**

The five sections of this standard are met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school. Systematic analysis of data regarding the performance of students has been incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement process, as has ongoing examination of instructional practices. The plan is updated and adjusted each year in alignment with perceived needs and in accordance with the requirements of the charter.

#### **Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel**

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah (or the charter) and are endorsed or properly, temporarily exempted for the subjects they are teaching.

#### **Standard VIII – Administration**

This standard is met. The administration of American Preparatory Academy provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary and required administrative procedures. The school administration is qualified in compliance with the school's charter, which does not require licensing by the USOE.

#### **Standard IX – Teacher Load**

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or NAAS.

#### **Standard X – Activities**

This standard is met. The school supports a range of activities that supplement and augment the basic instructional program by providing additional enriching

experiences for students consistent with the school's mission and beliefs. Attention is paid to providing equal opportunities.

### **Standard XI – Business Practices**

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

## **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan is directly related to the DRSLs and areas of the program identified as needing improvement. There are six action plans that address components of the two DRSLs. An example follows (Action Plan #2):

DRSL: Academic Achievement

Goal Statement: Consistent, frequent evaluation of student needs.

Organizational Weakness: Improvements can be made in the school physical environment.

Action steps, responsible individual, timeline and resource needs are listed in detail.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

It appears that all stakeholders understand the action plans and are committed to achieving the objectives of each.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school wide action plan appear to be?*

The follow-up process, as noted above, is detailed and understood by stakeholders.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel and parents for their hospitality and welcoming attitude.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for being frank and forthcoming about all aspects of the school program and its operations.
- The Visiting Team commends the obvious, close cooperation that exists among all stakeholders and students who share the commitment to seeking excellence and the endeavor to become a school of high quality, based on research and ongoing evaluation and assessment.
- The Visiting Team commends the strong, goal-directed leadership of American Preparatory Academy.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for creating a nurturing, loving, atmosphere.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for stressing the wise use of time.
- The Visiting Team commends school custodial personnel for the high level of maintenance and cleanliness of the school building and grounds.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its recently completed recreation outdoor area, with its soft flooring, as well as the new gymnasium. (Also see recommendations.)
- The Visiting Team commends the administration and faculty for using Power School and Grade Pro to report daily progress of students to their parents.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration for employing aides in all classrooms.
- The Visiting Team commends the highlighting of academic achievement in weekly assemblies in which students demonstrate achievement to other students.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its concept of mastery learning.
- The Visiting Team commends teaching systems for best learning (i.e., teaching best practices for learning different disciplines).
- The Visiting Team commends the attractive displays of students' work throughout the building, as well as the posting of the mission statement, learning objectives, themes, etc.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for using the ISQ (Indicators of School Quality) published by Utah State University.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty, leadership and parents for understanding and being committed to the objectives, philosophy, vision, foundations, etc., of the school.

**Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that all stakeholders work at establishing a central library as per the requirements of NAAS Standard IV.
- The Visiting Team recommends that more information on schedules and time on task be included in future self-studies.
- The Visiting Team recommends that all graphs be easily understandable or have better summaries.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the outdoor recreation area be expanded.

As a last word, the Visiting Team notes that a primary purpose of accreditation is to protect the public trust. Accreditation promotes voluntary self-regulation. It is a means of showing confidence in a school's performance (i.e., that both quantitative and qualitative standards have been established). An ultimate objective of the self-study and accreditation process should be that schools institutionalize the process of reflective inquiry and thereby become internally responsible for the maintenance of standards—even the creation of standards. The Visiting Team finds that American Preparatory Academy gives evidence of well understanding the purpose, processes and responsibilities of accreditation.